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ABSTRACT

California State University (CSU) at Chico developed a teacher credentialing program to provide culturally diverse, certified special education teachers for 12 rural counties in northern California. These counties are sparsely populated; include remote areas with difficult access; and contain large Hmong, Meo, American Indian, and Hispanic populations. The CSU-Chico program focuses on recruitment, training, and placement of trainees from underrepresented ethnic minorities as special educators that can meet the needs of rural multiethnic multilingual pupils with disabilities. Highlights of the program include integration of knowledge and skill bases of special education, bilingual education, and general education; early field experiences and career exploration; group or cadre affiliation; research-based instruction; student teaching under the guidance of a professional role model; and mentoring during teacher induction. Application requirements are rigorous, but culturally diverse students are eligible for substantial scholarships. After meeting special education prerequisites, students begin a three-semester credentialing program. Each semester consists of 16 credit hours of coursework plus field experience at a practicum training site. Students may then be hired as teacher interns within the 12 counties, have mentor support, and have 5 years to complete a fourth semester of coursework. Includes an outline of program requirements. (SV)

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MEETING CHANGING RURAL NEEDS: RECRUITMENT AND PREPARATION OF CULTURALLY DIVERSE SPECIALIST CADRES IN AN AWARD WINNING RURAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

MARCH 17, 1995
TROPICANA RESORT
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

The 16th Annual Report of Congress on the Implementation of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reports that fewer teachers are credentialed to teach an increasing number of students with disabilities. This 1991-1992 comprehensive study of students with disabilities, compiled by the U.S. Department of Education, shows the great need for programs to prepare special education teachers. The Special Edge (1994), a publication by the California Department of Education, reported a shortage of approximately 27,000 teachers in California. Teachers of students with learning disabilities; language, speech and hearing specialists; and teachers of students with serious emotional disturbance are in most demand.

In addition, institutes of higher education report that fewer and fewer minority students are enrolling in special education teacher preparation programs than in previous years (National Information Center for Children & Youth with Handicaps, NICHY, 1987). By the beginning of the 21st century, one-third of the school children and college-age population nationwide will be non-white (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). This reconfirms the growing cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity of our nation's schools, including our special education classrooms.

The California Department of Education "Fingertip Facts on Education in California" (1990-1991) report, reveals the imbalance between the racial and ethnic distribution in public schools among teachers and students. The Intersegmental Coordinating Council (1993) reports

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that 54% of California's K-12 students belong to ethnic minority groups. One out of every six children in elementary schools in California were born in another country. Furthermore, the Hispanic student population accounts for 34.4% in our California schools, while only 7.7% of the teachers are Hispanic. The demographic profile of new teachers in California is very similar to the national profile; that is, they are primarily white, 25 years old females who have come from suburban or rural settings.

Districts are discovering that it isn't easy to find minority candidates to fill teaching positions. One problem is that the pool of qualified minority educators is shrinking. In North Carolina, for example, the percentage of teachers who are black declined from 21 percent in 1980 to 16 percent in 1991. Many prospective minority teachers are lured by better-paying jobs in the private sector or are reluctant to enter a system that is undergoing dramatic changes. Nationwide, the teacher turnover rate is six percent annually, but in rural areas that figure increases to a frustrating 30-50 percent, with isolation as the most common reason for rural teachers to leave (Stone, 1990).

Rural Special Education teacher recruitment is difficult even in normal circumstances, but the recruitment of rural special education teachers who are culturally diverse is even more challenging.
The results of a national review of special education preservice preparation programs indicate that only 4 percent of prospective special education teachers were black and less that 2 percent were Hispanic.

California State University, Chico (CSU,C) has taken the lead in an aggressive training program for rural and remote Northern California school districts. Qualified teachers are hired by the districts on an emergency special education credential to meet the needs of students. A successful preservice and inservice intern training program through campus course work and via television satellites has offered an exemplary teacher training program. This special education internship program, "Finding and Keeping the Best," now in its fourth year, received the 1993 American Council of Rural Special Education Award "for its exemplary preservices and inservice teaching training program." It has prepared local rural special education teachers to remain in their rural and remote school districts and thus rural education has progressed.

Our next area of concentration is the training of qualified cultural diverse special education teachers for the rural and remote schools in

Northern California. Federal funding was received to ensure that rural California has a teaching force that reflects the cultural diversity of the community it serves. Special Education is part of a relatively new Department of Professional Studies in Education on the CSU,C campus which includes Bilingual-Multicultural Programs, Upward Bound, Teacher Diversity Projects, and the Reading Specialist Programs. The new Concurrent Teacher Specialist Program combines special education, elementary education (the Multiple Subjects Credential) and BCLAD/CLAD (Bilingual/Cross-Cultural, Language, and Academic Development). This innovative model has been lauded by the state as one that will prepare teachers to meet the diverse and complex needs of tomorrow's children. To assure that financial barriers are not keeping individuals from entering teaching fields, scholarship support is offered to qualified students from underrepresented ethnic groups. Among the objectives is to prepare the underrepresented teachers to meet the needs of rural multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic pupils with disabilities. It serves to offer a long-term response to the need for specialists who both reflect and assist the changing populations of rural northern California.

This project (described below) will prepare special educators in a geographic area of 36,000 square miles constituting fully one-fourth of the state's land mass. The size of the state of Indiana, this region is rural and sparsely populated with a density averaging 18 persons per square mile, compared to 130 persons per square mile for the state as a whole. (State Department of Finance, 1990). The region is mountainous, making access frequently difficult. Like other California rural areas, this region is experiencing a shifting of demographics as a result of changing patterns statewide. The area served by this grant includes 12 rural counties, five of which are state immigration centers for Hmong and Meo first-generation families, one which includes a Modoc Indian reservation, and four which serve large Hispanic/Latino populations, including migrant families (see Figure 1).

The Concurrent Special Education/Multiple Subjects/CLAD or BCLAD Program

The Concurrent Special Education/Multiple Subjects/CLAD or BCLAD credentialing program is a partnership between the Special Education, the Multiple Subjects and the Bilingual and Crosscultural departments. In addition, the special education faculty at California State University, Chico met with representatives from school districts in the service area and discussed program and personnel needs. An advisory board, consisting of administrators, teachers, parents and cultural diverse

university students designed a program based on the results of a competency needs assessment.

This needs assessment was conducted during three consecutive years (1991, 1992, 1993) and verified the need for improved quality of personnel. In particular, schools sought special educators who would welcome changing rural demographics and be committed to serving all pupils. The mere filling of vacancies with teachers was considered an insufficient response to the personnel crisis; the education of exceptional children was seen to be no more effective or appropriate than the quality of the teacher allowed.

The most critical issue was the development of a successful site-based teacher training program. The three semester teacher training program requires student placement in schools during each semester. This accelerated, intensive program requires that students be carefully selected. Criteria include a GPA of 3.0 during the last 30 units; three letters of reference; passing score on the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST); a writing sample and a successful interview with university faculty and a member of an underrepresented ethnic group.

The proposal, titled "Meeting Changing Rural Needs: Recruitment and Preparation of Culturally Diverse Specialist Cadres" was awarded by the United States Department of Education. It supports the National Education Goals by helping these individuals reach the high levels of achievement called for in the document Goals 2000: Educate America. It was designed to prepare special education teachers (especially culturally diverse teachers) to deliver a quality education to children in northern California.

Four main objectives are emphasized in the training program:

1. To develop long-term sources of supply for culturally diverse rural special educators that results in the recruitment of qualified trainees from underrepresented ethnic minorities.
2. To initiate a boldly redesigned structure that efficiently prepares California special educators to meet the needs of rural multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic pupils with disabilities.
3. To retain teachers from underrepresented ethnic groups through training as special educators.
4. To place the graduates in careers as rural special educators.

Highlights of the Concurrent program are:

* Integration of knowledge and skill bases of special education, bilingual, and general education
* Early school experiences and career exploration
* Group or cadre affiliation
* Research-based instruction
* Students teaching with guidance of a professional role model
* Mentoring induction

The first cadre of twenty students will be selected this spring for the 1995-1996 academic year. The application process consists of the following: (1) an application packet detailing the applicant's GPA, work experience, three letters of reference, a statement of professional goals and personal summary, passing score on the CBEST, (2) a short biographic sketch, (3) a written statement and a personal interview with a panel of faculty members, (4) a scholarship application for students of underrepresented ethnic groups, (5) proof of ethnicity. After successful completion of the application requirements, the cultural diverse students will be awarded a substantial scholarship for each semester.

The Concurrent Special Education/Multiple Subjects/CLAD or BCLAD Program offers students multiple credentials: a Multiple Subjects credential, a Special Education Credential and students will be certified in CLAD (Crosscultural, Language and Academic Development) or BCLAD (Bilingual). Most of the students are Liberal Studies or Child Development majors. Before students are admitted to the program, they must complete Multiple subjects and CLAD or BCLAD prerequisites (see attached figure 2). The two prerequisite courses for Special Education are: an overview of Special Education and a Field Practicum. After completing these two courses, students will begin the three semester credentialing program. After successfully completing the three semesters the student has earned a preliminary Special Education credential (Learning Handicap), Multiple Subjects credential, and is certified in CLAD or B/CLAD. The student may teach after the first three semesters, and has five years to complete a fourth semester of coursework for a clear Learning Handicap credential.

Each semester consists of 16 credit hours including field experience. Practicum training sites were selected based on approval of school district and site level leadership personnel. Schools within a twenty-five mile radius of campus were selected as training sites for the first semester of student teaching in the initial implementation of the project. This proximity ensures adequate access for supervision as well as University and

public school collaboration. As the project is tested, sites with even greater ethnic diversity, but at greater distance from campus, will be used. As teacher candidates complete initial training and process into an on-the-job induction year, they may be hired in any of the University's 12 rural counties. Induction-level support will be ensured through use of an existing rural mentor network.

Concurent Program Overview

Semester 1

FIELD EXPERIENCES IN: Crosscultural General Education Setting

INTEGRATED COURSEWORK IN:

* Curriculum and Instruction
* Literacy Development
* Classroom Management
* Multicultural Issues

Semester 2

STUDENT TEACHING IN: Crosscultural General and Special Education Settings

INTEGRATED COURSEWORK IN:

* Collaboration
* Diagnosis
* Assessment
* Adaptation of Curriculum and Instructional

Semester 3

SUPERVISED TEACHING IN: Special Education

INTEGRATED COURSESWORK IN:

* Technology
* Reading Diagnosis and Intervention
* Transition
* Vocational and Career Education
* Home, Parent and Community Relations

Semester 4

(teacher has five years to complete these courses)

ON-THE-JOB SUPPORT Employed as a teacher Intern with support of a mentor

COURSEWORK

* Consultation
* Staff Development
* Advanced Law and Regulations

Research by Graham (1987) revealed that culturally diverse students benefit more directly from a teacher role model when the teacher is a member of the student's own racial, ethnic and language group. Yet it is possible with the declining diversity of teachers that a student could complete the K-12 school experience and never meet a teacher of his/her ethnic or linguistic group. The shortage of culturally diverse teachers is a tremendous loss to all students; but for students of underrepresented groups, this loss is particularly detrimental. Culturally diverse children in rural areas need special education teachers who can be role models, providing cultural insights and sensitivities for all pupils. Who will better understand the Hispanic, Asian and Afro-American students than the Hispanic, Asian or Afro-American teacher?

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